

3-21-12 Design Review Board Meeting Minutes

Present: Holly Ben-Joseph (Co-Chair), Ann Sussman (Co-Chair), Conor Nagle, Ryan Bettez, Chris Dallmus, SELECTMAN Rep: David Clough

Public Present: Vincent Cuttone, Richard Mattocks, Demetri Papathanasiou, Steve Steinberg, Tom Peterman

Proponents currently own 5-lots in Kelley's Corner within view of main rte 27 + 111 intersection.

Kelley's Corner Development Discussion:

Significant Characteristics:

- The Town of Acton has a "right of way taking" - since 1994 (see attached) - to widen Kelley's Corner for a right-turn lane (4th lane) from rte 27 to rte 111 at owner Chris Starr's Meineke muffler corner site; this would speed traffic turning right to route 2; (as of 4/13/12 Eric Nascimento, District 3 traffic engineer, says the State has no plan to widen 111 at this time + as far as we know there is no plan in the town to do this) There was general sense at DRB meeting that widening 27 - should it ever occur - would make the intersection less desirable for pedestrians + kids.
- A non-culverted, or open stream, goes under the Kmart parking lot, flowing east, under route 27 and onto Southern edge of Sundberg (Sorento's Pizza) store land. This increases costs of development on this corner of the site; there are at least 2 other culverted streams flowing under 27 through the site which also increases development costs;
- There's a deed restriction on the land the bowling alley+the Pizza shop are on that allows any development under the zoning code with the exception of a non-CVS pharmacy. This is not necessarily a bad thing - however, it could restrict tenancy for future developers, limiting their client pool;
- Other factors influencing Development cost include:
 - 22'-grade change on south eastern section of Kelley's corner (the hill behind the new TD Bank, or around 408 Mass Ave); moving this amount of earth - effectively an acre or more of 2

stories of dirt and rock - adds significantly to hard + soft pro forma cost;

- Drive-thru pharmacies at Kelley's Corner were discussed; An application to redevelop the Goodyear parcel next to TD Bank, as a pharmacy doubling the footprint of the current building on site, is being worked on without a Drive -Thru, proponents said. However, the engineering to add a drive thru at a later date, if Acton zoning can be changed to allow Pharmacy drive-thrus, is in planning stage.
- Drive-thru banks were discussed: It was noted that Kelley's Corner already has 11 bank drive thrus with the new TD bank about to open; the 3-bank-drive thru configuration at TD is the legal precedent for Kelley's Corner as of 2011; since bank branches offer stable and highly desirable tenancy and banks tend to cluster, it is reasonable to assume more bank drive thrus are likely in Kelley's Corner future.
- The overall "walkability" of Kelley's Corner was discussed at length + the following points made:
 - Rte 111 in its entirety + Rte 27, at the main intersection traffic signals only, are STATE roads; and it is not possible (illegal, in fact) to get on-street parking on STATE owned roads generally; therefore the safe walking conditions provided by on-street parking that you see in Lexington Center, West Concord, Concord Center, Newbury Street, etc is not replicable in Kelley's Corner. It was mentioned however that walkability could be improved in interior parcels...but without on-street parking it would be more difficult to achieve on outer roads. This is because parked cars buffer pedestrians from traffic, and without them people don't feel safe - and for good reason, a pedestrian hit by a car going 30 mph has a 50% chance of death, one attendee said. Sidewalk safety might be improved - however Kelley's Corner in its current street lay-out will not feel like a village center like Lexington or Concord does since it lacks on-street parking + road layout.
 - On this last point, it was explained that traditional New England town centers, e.g. Lexington, Concord, etc have a "T"-intersection at their core (Waltham Street into Mass Ave in

Lexington Center; Walden St into Main St in Concord Center); they grew organically from a T-shaped road configuration that does not exist at Kelley's Corner; in architecture + planning road configuration is destiny; it's where design starts.

- There was discussion about residential density required for walkability + that the residential density currently was not high enough for it, and likely because of site constraints never could be, most attendees seemed to agree. It was pointed out that the vast majority of people get to Kelley's Corner by car + this would likely not change in the foreseeable future;
- There was discussion about walkable retail + street grids; "You need to be able to access stores from 4 sides," a guest said - and it was noted that there weren't enough road networks with intersecting through streets in Kelley's Corner for easy walking; if that was desired, new roads need to be put in + cul-de-sacs in the area connected to through streets; these are all financially costly + politically difficult issues.
- There was discussion about Parking + mention of the International Council of Shopping Center (ICSC) standards for parking at 4 spaces for 1000 sf of retail; new parking lots in Kelley's Corner provide double the international standard, one guest noted. Strip-mall site design or some version of it, eg a small building surrounded by a very large parking lot is therefore in effect the de facto standard for development in the area, another guest said. Other parking arrangements, such as underground parking are expensive and may be even more costly here because of ground water issues.
- There was discussion about how retail was changing in the age of Internet shopping - how "point + click" internet shopping was impacting "brick + mortar" development, limiting the viability of traditional storefronts in the suburbs; however, there was also talk about how the new retail; speciality supermarkets, medical offices, 'convenience' retail, prepared-food markets, seemed to be growing; etc. - these are new opportunities.
- There was mention of plans for a new traffic light at 'No-Name Road' + 111; some 700 ft east of the existing Kelley's Corner signals; this is

in the initial planning prompted by developer/land owner concern about traffic congestion at 'No-Name Road', a guest said. No-Name Road legally was created years ago as a driveway to access the Roche Bro's site.

In conclusion, heavy traffic volume, street parking limitations, topography, hydrology including the presence of open underground streams, as well as high land costs and multiple land ownership, make Kelley's Corner "a very difficult area to develop," one proponent said. There seemed to be general consensus on this. It was also pointed out that none of the parcels are owned by the Town.

Discussion moved to new LIP (Local Initiative Program) in progress, The Meadows at Acton, a development of 26 mostly 3-bedroom homes across from the Donelan's supermarket on rte 2A. Two houses in the development are to be sold to Acton Housing Authority and will have two bedrooms, with the rest three unless owners request otherwise. It was agreed that this project was too far along for DRB review at this point, but the members thanked the proponent for bringing the project to their attention and presenting the site plan.

Attached please find: 1) QuitClaim Deed for Perpetual Easement at 263 Main Street (former Meineke site);
2) Rte 111 Road showing State's 65-foot wide control on the roadway - this is a 1907 plan showing 111 as a two-lane road bounded by rock walls and many elm and oak trees.